



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

language, can leave little room for scepticism, except to such as make scepticism a profession. Yet, all this testimony, derived from a hundred various sources, and uniting in one focus, is thrown by our candid objector unceremoniously into the shade.

So strong, however, is the concatenation of evidence thus produced, as to be considered irresistible by many persons fully capable of estimating its value. It has not only served as the torch of truth, but likewise as the touchstone of fable and imposition. And it answered this useful purpose at no very distant period, in detecting an idle fabrication, which appeared in an evening paper under the signature of "Owen Williams." The positive tone of that letter, and the high colouring of its narrative, so inconsistent with all preceding accounts, excited at once a suspicion as to its genuineness, which a subsequent investigation fully confirmed. When Dr. Jones condescends to make another attack on this "unfounded tradition," he will perhaps favour the world with his opinion of Mr. Owen Williams's "unfounded" report. And in the mean time it may be a satisfaction to him to learn, that the forgery has been traced to its author.

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS.

REV. PETER ROBERTS*.

MR. ROBERTS was born in the parish of Rhiwabon, in the county of Denbigh, about the year 1760. His father, John Roberts, was the younger son of a freeholder in that parish, and descended from a family which had, for many generations, occupied their small domain, called Tai'n-y-nant, without any material change in their circumstances. He was himself by trade a clock-maker, and established himself in that business, first, at his native village Rhiwabon, but afterwards removed to Wrexham. At this latter place, when a rival tradesman, with a view of depreciating his rustic opponent, pompously announced himself to the public, in large characters, as a "clock-maker from Lon-

* The Editor wishes he were at liberty to publish the name of the gentleman, to whom he is indebted for this interesting Memoir. But some of the readers of the CAMBRO-BRITON will, no doubt, recognize in it the production, which so deservedly obtained the applause of the Cambrian Society at Caermarthen.—ED.

don,” Roberts ingeniously turned him into ridicule, by exhibiting a similar board over his own shop-door, and describing himself as “clock-maker from *Rhiwabon*.” He was an honest and respectable man; but, though he enjoyed the means, he inconsiderately neglected the opportunity, of establishing his family in a state of comfortable competency. His wife was nearly allied to the ancient family of the Middletons of Chirk Castle.

Their son and only child, Peter Roberts, was sent, at a very early age, to the Grammar School at Wrexham, which was then in great repute, under the care of the Rev. Mr. Davies, afterwards rector of Llanarmon-dyffryn-Ceiriog. His early proficiency was very conspicuous, and gave, even at that time, no obscure indication of his subsequent celebrity. He employed his leisure hours upon various mechanical curiosities, for which he displayed a remarkable genius. Of music he continued, at all times, to be an enthusiastic admirer, and he was enabled, at a very early age, to enjoy his favourite amusement, by playing upon a dulcimer of his own construction. He also attempted to make a telescope. At this period his mind was in a remarkable degree tinctured with superstition. Having remained at Wrexham until the age of fifteen or sixteen, he removed to the Grammar School at St. Asaph, as is generally understood, in the double character of pupil and assistant. The school at St. Asaph was then in a very flourishing state, under the superintendence of the Rev. Peter Williams, afterwards vicar of Bettws Abergele, and, besides a great number of pupils from the neighbouring counties, could boast of several scholars from the sister kingdom of Ireland. To some of the latter Mr. Roberts was, naturally enough from his situation in the school, engaged as a private tutor; and a circumstance happened at this time which gave a more permanent character to the connection between him and his young pupils.

Dr. Usher, then a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, and afterwards Professor of Astronomy in that University, came over at this period to North Wales, and resided there for several months. By some accident now unknown, or perhaps by direct information from the Irish Scholars, he became acquainted with Peter Roberts, and, as he highly appreciated his character and talents, strongly encouraged him to transfer his studies under his auspices to the University of Dublin. With this proposal, which, in his financial difficulties, probably presented the only chance of an University education, and obviously opened a wide field to

his literary ambition, our young student readily complied, and, entering as a Sizar in that celebrated seat of learning, very soon attracted the notice, and secured the permanent esteem, of his superiors in the College. A few months before his decease he expressed most strongly to one of his friends a deep sense of gratitude for the kindness, which he had experienced from the Senior Fellows in his youth. It is understood, that his old pupils from St. Asaph, as they successively entered the University, availed themselves of his private tuition. Astronomy and the Oriental Languages were at this time his favourite studies, and such was his proficiency in the former, that his patron, Usher, contemplated him as well qualified to succeed himself in the Professorship. Mr. Roberts himself had also considered the Astronomical Chair as the great object of his ambition; but a different arrangement took place when the vacancy actually happened, and the office was bestowed upon another person, who, with whatever feelings we may reflect upon the disappointment of our learned countryman, must be universally admitted to be well deserving of this high honour. It is believed, that this disappointment, the first of a serious nature which he had ever experienced, was very painful to Mr. Roberts.

About the commencement of the French Revolution he travelled in the south-west of France for the benefit of his health, and remained for some time at the waters of Barreges, near the Pyrénées. Of this tour he left among his papers a manuscript journal, which however is not sufficiently interesting, nor indeed does it appear to have been ever intended, for publication. Returning to Ireland, he was employed as private tutor in several families. He was afterwards engaged to superintend the education of the present Lord Lanesborough and his cousin, now Colonel Latouche, of the —— Militia. These he eventually accompanied to Eton, where his character became more generally known, and he had an opportunity of acquiring many valuable friends, among whom he used particularly to enumerate Bishop Douglas, Mr. Bryant, and Dr. Heath. By these and other friends he was encouraged to publish his "*Harmony of the Epistles*," the preparation of which had occupied many years of his life; and, through their intercession and recommendation, the University of Cambridge printed the work at their own expence. The high character of this publication, the most laborious and valuable of all his works, fully justifies the liberal patronage of the University, and will, unquestionably,

transmit the author's name, as an eminent scholar and divine, to future ages. When the education of his pupils was completed he retired to his native country, subsisting upon two annuities, which he received from his former pupils Lords Lanesborough and Bolton. His time was now at his own disposal, and this was, perhaps, the first uninterrupted possession of it, which he had ever enjoyed. The illustration of his native language, and of the antient history of the Cymry, became now his favourite pursuits, and he certainly brought to the discussion of these subjects such powers of mind, united with such multifarious and general knowlege, as few Welshmen have evinced since the time of the celebrated Edward Llwyd. His eminent character for general literature excited an additional interest for the subjects, of which he treated, and awakened in many instances the curiosity of those, who would have turned with disgust from the works of humbler authors, and had esteemed the investigation of the Welsh history and language as useless as it was certainly then deemed unfashionable. To the effect of his example and labours may undoubtedly be traced much of that better taste, which now prevails in the Principality, and which we may reasonably hope to see far more widely disseminated under the auspices of the Cambrian Society.

Hitherto, however, though he had written much and ably upon professional subjects, none of the dignities or emoluments of his profession had fallen to his share. Of Bishop Douglas's favourable intentions towards him there can be no doubt; but the death of the Bishop put an end to all expectations of preferment from that quarter. Bishop Horsey also, in common with others, entertained a very high opinion of his character, and in answer to a question hesitatingly put, whether he knew a Mr. Peter Roberts, quickly replied, "To be sure I do, there is but one Peter Roberts in the world." But his first preferment was derived from Bishop Cleaver, who presented him with the living of Llanarmon,—a living certainly of little value, but whic'h he had strongly solicited, and perhaps more highly valued, because it was the preferment of his old master and friend Mr. Davies. The cold and retired situation of this place rendered it very unsuitable to his numerous bodily infirmities, and to the nervous sensibility of his mind, for which the enlivening intercourse of friendly society was now become indispensable. He therefore spent only a few of the summer months at his living, but continued to make his regular home in the town of Oswestry,

where he was generally respected for his literary talents and private worth. About four or five years ago Lord Crewe gave him the living of Madeley, in Shropshire, and at a later period that distinguished patron of learning, Bishop Burgess, offered him preferment, which was respectfully declined, within the diocese of St. David's. In December last his income received a most important addition, and was probably rendered amply commensurate with all his wants, by the living of Halkyn, which Bishop Luxmore gave him in exchange for Llanarmon. He removed to his new preferment in the following February, and, being unable to procure a curate immediately, entered upon what was a new employment to him, the active duties of a parish priest. So little had he been accustomed to parochial duty, that his ministerial labours in the course of a few months at Halkyn, exceeded, by his own account, those of his whole preceding life. In the pulpit he certainly did not excel; but this will not appear surprising, if we reflect upon his physical infirmities at this time, and that until this late period of his life he had never preached any but a few occasional sermons. But his affability, the native benevolence of his heart, and charitable attentions to the poor, rendered him a great favourite with his parishioners.

His labours were now approaching fast to their termination, and, we trust, also to their reward. He had been accustomed for many years to complain of his low spirits, his head-achs, and other infirmities; and his friends had in vain recommended to him more frequent exercise in the open air, as the best medicine for his bodily and mental ailments. The exertions, which the personal discharge of his duties at Halkyn called forth, seemed to have a favourable effect upon his health, and he represented himself as more than usually exempt from infirmity in the latter end of the spring. On Ascension-Day he read the service of the Church without any particular inconvenience, and, having returned home, was soon after called to the door by a pauper who solicited his charity. He was in the act of administering relief when he was stretched helpless by an apoplectic attack, and, though he lingered until the following morning, he continued speechless and apparently insensible until he expired. On his table were found several letters, one of which, directed to his patron the Bishop of St. Asaph, was intended to express to him the happiness he enjoyed in his new situation. So uncertain is the tenure of human happiness in our present state.

In private life he was in the highest degree amiable. As a

companion he was distinguished by a playful cheerfulness of manner, an inexhaustible fund of anecdote, and a happy facility of communicating information to others. As a neighbour he was remarkably kind, friendly, and charitable. His whole conduct was stamped by the most unshaken probity, which was rendered yet more interesting by a certain guileless simplicity peculiar to himself. His erudition was unquestionable, and, without any disparagement to living merit, he may be safely pronounced a more general and profound scholar than any Welshman of the present day. He was particularly skilled in Hebrew and Rabbincal learning. His "Letters to Volney" are supposed to exhibit in the most advantageous light the vigour of his reasoning powers as well as his philological and scientific acquirements. As an antiquary, it must be admitted, that, in endeavouring to establish a favourite hypothesis, he was sometimes precipitate and fanciful, and that his judgment upon such occasions can not be implicitly depended upon. Even his best friends must concede, that his "History of the Antient Britons," and his "British Kings" display many proofs of inconclusive reasoning, and credulous weakness. But these are only partial blemishes; and his singular learning, and the devotion of his great talents to the literature and history of Cambria, will always command the esteem, and, it may be confidently added, excite the emulation of his countrymen.

The following will probably be found a correct List of his Publications. He frequently spoke of his intention to publish a Hebrew Lexicon *, and some other works; but none of these were in a state of any forwardness. And it has been ascertained, that, with the exception of a translation of the Law Triads, which he perhaps designed to produce at Carmarthen, he has left behind him no manuscript in a state of sufficient preparation to be committed to the press. His works are these:

Christianity Vindicated, in a Series of Letters to Mr. Volney
—Harmony of the Epistles—An Essay on the Origin of the Constellations—Art of Universal Correspondence—A Sketch of the Early History of the Cymry, or Antient Britons—Review of the Policy and peculiar Doctrines of the Modern Church of Rome—Manual of Prophecy—Collectanea Cambrica—Letter to Dr. Milner on the supposed Miracle at St. Winifred's Well—and the Cambrian Popular Antiquities.

* A specimen of this work, it is believed, was submitted, with a view to publication, to the University of Oxford, where its merits were highly appreciated.—ED.